

THE NATIONALIST.

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THE NATIONALIZATION OF INDUSTRY.

THE simplest definition of this new term, "Nationalism," is National control of all industrial forces. But the better to understand what Nationalists aim at we must contrast them with their natural opponents, the Individualists, and particularly such Individualists as really have warm hearts for their fellowmen. These latter want to abolish all the evils of the present system but to retain the system itself i. e. the system of competition and real property. Right here Nationalists take issue with them and charge them with blindness. These evils, they say, are the natural and inevitable fruits of the system, as much as sour apples are the fruit of the tree on which they grow. This is the first decisive fact that these upholders of the present system will not or cannot see. The second is, they talk with such fondness and concern of the present system, as if they believed that it has been the foundation of Society since the beginning of our civilization and that civilized Society could have no other foundation. The actual facts are precisely the reverse. Our present industrial system has lasted but a couple of hundred years; it even is in a constant flux and, in fact, has never been so unstable as now. It is precisely the characteristic of our present system, moved as it is by Competition, to be in a feverish activity, to go on enlarging factories, concentrating business, creating a monopoly now in one, now in another branch of trade and making the monopolies more and more embarrassing until finally we of these United States, first of all — because here the system enjoys the greatest liberty — behold the "Trust" and very likely before the new century dawns, every business will be concentrated in a Trust, extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

But it will not stop here. The feverish activity of our competitive system, far from cooling down, becomes more and more intense; it may be compared to the spinning top which boys play with and which can be prevented from collapsing only by being forced to move quicker and quicker; so even the Trust must go on enlarging and concentrating;

that is, private monopolies will, by virtue of the very principle indwelling in them and which are of their very essence, become a national monopoly.

Do not exclaim here "Suppose you are right ; still, it is a change that does not concern us, but a distant future. We care only for improvements that will benefit us immediately or, at least, can be carried out in ten to twenty years."

Wait a little ! Suppose that the decisive change—the "blessed" change surely, if the picture in Bellamy's splendid book *Looking Backward* is anything near the reality—should not be realized before the year 2000 in which its scene is laid, do you reflect that this year is not further away from us in the future, than our Revolution is behind us? That we stand midway between 1775 and 2000? That thus by working for something to happen in the year 2000 it is our grand-children we are working for? Then consider by that time our probable population, 200,000,000 people ; consider the immense extent to which our wealth and resources, on the one hand, and our poverty and dependence on the other will then have grown, under our present system ; finally the growth of knowledge and discontent among the masses and who can doubt that they will long before that year imperatively demand a change?

Surely it is time to consider the final change of private monopolies into a national monopoly more particularly now when the Western Union Telegraph Co. insolently claims private ownership of our streets, and when private concerns take steps here in Massachusetts to monopolize forever the right to furnish light and heat.

But though this radical change will be just as natural as that from the flower into the fruit, the character of the two "monopolies" will be just as adverse to each other as heaven is to hell. You mix one volume of hydrogen gas with one volume of oxygen, and the mass will remain the same under any action of electricity ; there is no change if you go on adding hydrogen little by little to it, until you have two volumes of it ; if now you pass an electric spark through the mixture you instantly have water, a substance totally different from its previous mass. Likewise the industries of the country, concentrated into Trusts, co-extensive with our national limits, will, the moment they pass from private control under national control, and their operatives and managers become public functionaries, totally revolutionize our whole civilization.

First, they will be carried on exclusively for the public advantage, while now they are conducted, principally, for private gain. This will

work not merely a remarkable national change, but a much more remarkable moral one. Once more the great virtue, loyalty, will be vitalized and come to honor and men will again take pride in turning out good work. Think of it, that not alone transportation corporations will no longer utilize our highways, in the first place, to pocket profits, but that also our butchers and tailors will no longer furnish meat and make clothes in order principally that they may live and grow wealthy, but in order that good meat and clothes may be provided to customers at fair returns — which has, indeed, always been the real reason why we had butchers and bakers — and that these butchers and bakers will find their true reward in being equally well served in the innumerable other circles where they are consumers. This different standpoint from which to look at our work will alone effect a wonderful change.

Second, production will be indefinitely increased as soon as it is carried on to satisfy social wants. That will be, undoubtedly, the greatest effect, of the change, for our great need is increased production. And what prevents this now? This fact, and this alone, that production is carried on for the sake of *profit*, exclusively. When profits are endangered production is arbitrarily stopped. Profit-making, then, which at first was a spur to production, has of late become an impediment, hemming production in as with a wall of granite. Abolish it, and production will immediately expand immensely. All bare backs and feet will be covered and empty stomachs filled, and all idle hands and brains will be furnished with opportunities to earn the wherewithal to pay for what they get.

Third, leisure, that greatest boon of civilization and pre-requisite to all progress, will be the birth-right of every citizen. Leisure is altogether different from idleness; it presupposes appropriate work, not so protracted as to become toil, and which guarantees a decent living. It is the greatest indictment on our civilization, that the vast majority of men yet live, in order to work; that they must work, ten to twelve hours each and every day, merely in order to live.

Fourth, this miserable dependence on individuals which now crushes all manhood out of all our wage-earners and nearly all our salaried fellow-men will become a thing of the past. How shameful that a American citizen should depend on the mere whim and caprice of a master, in order to enjoy the privilege of working for a living. Have our wage-workers not good reason to call the wage-system "wage-slavery"? In what does it differ from chattel-slavery but in features to their prejudice? The slave owners bought the whole time of the slaves, but were com-

pelled to care for them in sickness and old age; our employers buy 10 or 12 hours out of every 24 of the time of the wage-earners, but with no corresponding responsibility. For it must be noticed that though now labor is treated as a ware, which its owner can dispose of at his pleasure it differs radically from all other commodities in being inseparable from the person of the worker. In buying the labor, the employer thus buys virtually the body and soul of the worker for the time being.

This will be changed. The most unskilled wage-worker will be able to walk and demean himself as a man, in all his human dignity, the moment all dependence on individuals is abolished and he, as every body else, becomes dependent only on the impersonal sovereign: Society or the Collectivity. It will no longer be a matter of favor to have an opportunity for being useful. All will be public functionaries, with this difference from those we now know, that ability and skill and not recommendation or favor, will be the passports to higher position.

All land, raw materials, machineries—all capital so-called—will be turned over into the hands of the nation. That does not, necessarily, mean confiscation however. It is Henry George's idea to confiscate all rent, not paying a rent as compensation; but it is not ours. We suppose that the change will be accomplished peaceably and by the ballot; we hope this and this certainly is what we are working for. In that way the capital turned over could be paid for to its full value.

No one, on reflection, will contend that society has not a perfect right to do what is here outlined. Private property is not abolished. Far from it, everybody is enabled to earn and enjoy property. But the property may be only enjoyed: eaten, drunk, consumed. It may not in the future be "invested" in production, which, experience now has told us, is equivalent to being used to fleece our fellow-men therewith. Such a restriction on the use of property is like the restriction on a man, now buying a revolver, that he must not use it for shooting indiscriminately in the public streets. The principle point is, Society has a perfect right to say how in the future production shall be carried on and that profit-mongering shall for the future be unlawful.

This is, to every thoughtful mind, an evident outcome of our civilization. It will be, if not the final stage—of that we can know nothing—the next stage, and one for which our whole previous civilization has been a preparation. First slavery, then serfdom, then the wage-system, and at last social co-operation.

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